



May 18, 2004

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Written *Ex Parte* Submission in MB Docket No. 03-15**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On June 6, 2002, NAB and a number of other parties, including APTS, PBS and Pennsylvania State University urged the Commission to grant primary status to the multiple transmitters in a distributed transmission system and license them under Part 73 of the rules, as opposed to treating them similarly to LPTV, translator, and booster stations.<sup>1</sup> Distributed transmission has been defined as being similar to a cellular telephone system in that a service area is divided into a number of cells, each served by its own low power transmitter.<sup>2</sup> Distributed transmission differs from a cellular telephone system in that all adjacent cells use the same frequency (a “single-frequency network”).<sup>3</sup> Further a distributed transmission system is spectrum efficient because it provides service only within the predicted DTV contour. In the above captioned docket, the Commission has sought comment on a number of issues related to distributed transmission systems and the proposal to grant these services a limited kind of priority.

As the Comments of Merrill Weiss Group<sup>4</sup> in this proceeding explain, distributed transmission technology can offer solutions to a number of difficult system design problems that often can be resolved in no other way. It has applications to reach blocked populations within a station’s service area. This is especially important in hilly or

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Valerie Schulte, NAB, to Rick Chessen, Associate Bureau Chief, Media Bureau (June 6, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See comments filed in response to the *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* in MM Docket No. 00-39, including those of the Merrill Weiss Group (“Weiss”).

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Comments of Merrill Weiss Group, MB Docket No. 03-15 (April 21, 2003), p. 7.

mountainous terrain with large populations living in valleys. It can be useful when a station is unable to obtain sufficient tower capacity at an adequate height to reach the service area that has been allotted to it. It can be used when a station has started with a small service area and needs to maximize that service area without enlarging its central facility. It is the only method that can allow relatively uniform signal levels to be achieved throughout a widely dispersed service area so as to enable, for example, reception using indoor antennas while at the same time not increasing interference to neighboring broadcasters. Distributed transmission can also allow broadcasters to locate their main transmitters at locations optimized for serving large DMAs while at the same time obtaining necessary City Grade service over outlying communities. And it can help with replication of NTSC service by DTV facilities that otherwise might not be able to achieve the coverage needed, especially in cases of VHF broadcasters moving to UHF channels.

Recent demonstrations of a similar technology – namely digital on-channel repeaters – have shown that distributed transmission networks can be both technically feasible and spectrum efficient.<sup>5</sup> Public Television believes that distributed transmission networks will serve to promote the DTV transition by providing digital signals in areas where, due to terrain or other factors, distribution of a digital signal would be otherwise difficult.

Public Television therefore supports the development of distributed transmission networks. In this case, the Commission should give primary status to DTV stations in a distributed transmission network and license them under part 73 of its rules if such networks fall within the predicted DTV contour of a full power DTV operation. In such circumstances, distributed transmission networks should be treated with the interference protection due to a full power DTV operation. With regard to the more technical issues raised by the Commission's Notice in this docket, Public Television generally supports the approach suggested by the Merrill Weiss Group in its comments in this proceeding.<sup>6</sup>

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Lonna M. Thompson  
Lonna M. Thompson  
Vice President and General Counsel  
Andrew D. Cotlar  
Assistant General Counsel  
Association of Public Television Stations  
666 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 1100  
Washington, D.C. 20001

/s/ Donna Coleman Gregg  
Donna Coleman Gregg  
Vice President, General Counsel and  
Corporate Secretary  
Robert M. Winteringham  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Corporation for Public Broadcasting  
401 Ninth Street, NW

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<sup>5</sup> See Comments of APTS, PBS and CPB, Docket No. 03-15, pp. 39 et. seq. (April 21, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Comments of Merrill Weiss Group, MB Docket No. 03-15 (April 21, 2003).

www.apt.org  
Telephone: 202-654-4200  
Fax: 202-654-4236

Washington, DC 20004  
www.cpb.org  
Telephone: 202-879-9600  
Fax: 202-879-9693

/s/ Katherine Lauderdale

Katherine Lauderdale  
Senior Vice President and General Counsel  
Kristine DeBry  
Sr. Counsel and Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs  
Public Broadcasting Service  
1320 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1698  
www.pbs.org  
Telephone: 703-739-5000  
Fax: 703-837-3300

CC:

Jon Cody, Office of Chairman Powell  
Stacy Robinson Fuller, Office of Commissioner Abernathy  
Jordan Goldstein, Office of Commissioner Copps  
Catherine Crutcher Bohigian, Office of Commissioner Martin  
Johanna Mikes Shelton, Office of Commissioner Adelstein  
Thomas P. Van Wazer, Counsel for Merrill Weiss